



Silent Nominal Heads in Manner Adverbials

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Abstract:

In this study we will start from a suggestion taken from Kayne's proposal (2016) about silent heads, in order to analyse the structure of some specific adverbial PPs in different languages. It will be argued that behind certain manner constructions consisting of a preposition plus an adjective may lie a full nominal phrase, whose head is generally – but not exclusively – silent. This study will show that there is a cross-linguistic tendency to create manner expressions using a nominal head meaning 'way' or 'manner', and also that this head may change diachronically, either becoming silent to form idiomatic expressions, or being reanalysed and grammaticalised into a productive adverbial suffix.

Keywords: *Ellipsis, German Superlative, Manner Adverbials, Preposition, Romance Languages*

1. Introduction

Kayne (2005, 2016) hypothesises that many items that are normally described as heads represent in fact only the overt part of a larger nominal phrase. This analysis would apply to sentence-final particles, modals, aspectual constructions, and even tense and determiners might hide a more complex covert structure.

A useful way to explain this analysis is to compare the following two sentences (taken from Kayne (2016: 26)):

- (1) a. Have you been waiting long?
b. Have you been waiting a long time?

According to Kayne's (2016) proposal, it is reasonable to think that both sentences display the same syntactic structure. Let us assume, as per Kayne's generalisation (2005: 212), that UG imposes only one interpretable syntactic feature for each lexical item, so that, for example, an adjective like *long* modifies a noun providing the concept of [magnitude], and a noun like *time* provides the concept of [temporal extension]. Since both (1a) and

(1b) refer to the notion of [time], Kayne concludes that both should contain the noun *time*, which is overt in the latter, but covert in the former sentence.

We can paraphrase Kayne's proposal using the metaphor of icebergs, so that when we look at what we label as heads, we would actually be looking only at the overt realisation of a larger construction, just like the emerging top of an iceberg, while the real head – and possibly also other elements which are adjacent to it – remains silent, invisible under the surface.

We will not go into the details that brought Kayne to the generalisation that theoretically all heads are silent, nor will we examine each case treated in his study. We agree upon the fact that some heads may remain silent in certain constructions and under certain conditions, but we would not extremise this assumption by claiming that all heads are silent. Much work is undoubtedly still needed on this matter.

Nevertheless, the idea that what we pronounce may not represent all there is, and that some elements may remain covert at the phonological level, is interesting and may shed some light on some specific adverbial constructions attested cross-linguistically.

In the present study we will focus on manner adverbials appearing as prepositional phrases, showing that in different languages they can be analysed as full nominal phrases whose head is generally silent.

First, we will discuss the possibility that a silent head may be embedded in the particular construction involved in the formation of German adverbs in the superlative degree.

Then, we will suggest that a head of a semantically identical or similar shape may be present in adverbial constructions in Romance languages, where it can remain silent or be overtly realised.

2. German adverbs in the superlative degree

It is well-known by those who are familiar with German that the degrees of the adjective in this language display the following pattern: the comparative degree is obtained through the addition of the suffix *-er* to the adjectival root, whereas the superlative degree is created with the suffix *-(e)st*, in both cases with apophonic variation in disyllabic roots, e.g. *scharf* 'sharp' → (comp.) *schärf-er* 'sharper', → (sup.) *schärf-st* 'sharpest'.

It is also common knowledge that German adverbs may be formed by simply using an adjective in its uninflected form, but while the positive and comparative degrees of an adverb perfectly match the positive and comparative degrees of their corresponding adjective (so that *schnell* means (adj.) 'fast, quick' and (adv.) 'fast, quickly', just like *schneller* means (adj.) 'faster' and (adv.) 'faster, more quickly', depending on its function), the superlative degree behaves differently.

In fact, the superlative degree of the adverb *schnell* is not **schnellst*, but *am schnellsten* 'fastest', and the same is valid for any other adjective, e.g. *am schärfsten* 'most sharply', *am liebsten* 'the most', etc.

Analysing this construction, we immediately identify the presence of the lexical adjective in the superlative degree extended with the suffix *-st-*, and we also notice the addition of the oblique case marker *-en*. The latter agrees with the preceding element *am*, which consists of the preposition *an* 'at' and which requires a complement marked with dative case, plus the masculine/neuter dative determiner *dem* 'the'.

Kayne (2016) does not examine in detail the possible presence of silent heads in adverbs or adverbial constructions, but his analysis of the distinction between *long* and *a long time* in the previously quoted examples looks rather promising to explain the present construction.

Keeping in mind the essence of Kayne's idea – that is, that some material may remain concealed beneath the surface –, we can think that behind this German construction lies a complete nominal phrase with a silent head. Morphologically, this head must be of masculine

or neuter gender, as required by the element *am*, and, semantically, it should convey a manner meaning, judging from the general sense of the whole expression. We suggest that, in the specific case of German superlative adverbs, the silent nominal head in question may be identified as (m.) *Weg* ‘way’, used in its figurative sense of ‘path, method, manner’, which agrees with the gender of the elements that are visible in such construction.

In other words, whenever a German speaker utters a sentence like (2), the nominal head with which the adjective agrees is concealed, which we write between angle brackets:

- (2) Johann fährt am schnellsten <Weg>.
 Johann drive.PRS.3SG at.DET.DAT fast-SUP-DAT way.DAT
 ‘Johann drives very fast.’

The presence of a noun ‘way’ as the head of a manner adverbial construction is self-intuitive and in many languages manner adverbs and adverbials are simply formed analytically as prepositional phrases containing an element with a meaning similar to that of ‘way’. Compare for instance the case of English, where the counterpart of German *Weg*, i.e. English *way*, is generally overtly pronounced, e.g. *in this way*, *one way or another*, *no way*, or the case of Romance languages, where Spanish (f.) *manera* ‘manner’ is commonly used in adverbial constructions such as *de manera rápida* ‘quickly’, *a mi manera* ‘my way’, etc. (cf. Štekauer et al. 2012; Hummel 2017), or Italian (m.) *modo* ‘manner’ in *a modo mio* ‘my way’, *in modo esaustivo* ‘exhaustively’, *ad ogni modo* ‘anyway’, etc.

Therefore, the hypothesis of a silent nominal head meaning ‘way’ in German superlative adverbs finds cross-linguistic support from other languages, and even more so if we consider that this head is also found overtly in other types of German constructions that are introduced by the preposition *auf* ‘in, at; on’, such as *auf direktem Weg* ‘directly, in a direct way’, *auf friedlichem Weg* ‘friendly’, *auf dem schnellsten Weg* ‘as fast as possible’, with the same manner function and the same abstract meaning for *Weg*.

In the examples introduced by the preposition *auf*, the noun *Weg* must always be pronounced, as exemplified in (3), otherwise the construction is ungrammatical:

- (3) a. Johann fährt auf dem schnellsten Weg.
 Johann drive.PRS.3SG at.DET.DAT fast-SUP-DAT way.DAT^o
 ‘Johann drives as fast as possible.’
 b. *Johann fährt auf dem schnellsten.

On the other hand, if we try to insert *Weg* in the examples introduced by the preposition *an*, the interpretation that we obtain of this noun is never the abstract/manner-like ‘way, manner’, but the concrete/literal ‘way, road’ one.

We can thus syntactically represent the adverbial construction (i.e. the adverb in the superlative degree) in (2) as shown in (4), with *Weg* written between angle brackets to indicate its covert status:

- (4) [_{PP} [_{P°} an [_{DP} [_{D°} dem ... [_{DegP} [_{Deg°} schnell_i-sten [_{AP} [_{A°} t_i]]]]] ... [_{NP} [_{N°} <Weg>]]]]]]

Support for the presence of a silent head meaning ‘way, manner’ in adverbial constructions also comes from the comparison with the German adverbs that are morphologically marked, that is those created through the addition of the suffix *-erweise*, such as *normalerweise* ‘normally’, *traurigerweise* ‘sadly’, etc.

As discussed by Thorvaldsen (2023), the addition of the suffix *-erweise* to an adjectival base to form an adverb has its historical roots in an old adverbial construction of the genitivus absolutus sort (cf. Paraschkewoff 1976), so that an earlier **normaler Weise* (lit.) ‘of normal

manner' later came to be reanalysed as *normal-erweise*. This reanalysis led to the creation of a new suffix *-erweise* through segmentation, which in modern German is productively added to an adjectival base to form adverbs (cf. Elsner 2015, 2018; Thorvaldsen 2023).

What interests us here is to show the historical development of such constructions, namely how a nominal head meaning 'way, manner' was first used to create an adverbial construction (as shown in (5)), later to be reanalysed as an adverbial suffix, as shown in Figure (1).

The original genitive construction is shown in (5), whereas Figure (1) illustrates how the process may work nowadays: we assume that the head of a maximal projection Adv(erbial)P(hrase) (v. Cinque 1999; Laenzlinger 2004: 211; Austin et al. 2004) can select an adjectival phrase as its complement and that this phrase is then attracted to Adv[°], where it adjoins to the adverbial suffix *-erweise*.¹

This raising can be accounted for in terms of probe-goal agreement if we assume that the head Adv[°] is labelled with a feature [manner] that needs to be interpreted.

- (5) $[_{AP} [_{A^{\circ}} \text{normaler} [_{NP} [_{N^{\circ}} \text{Weise}]]]]]$

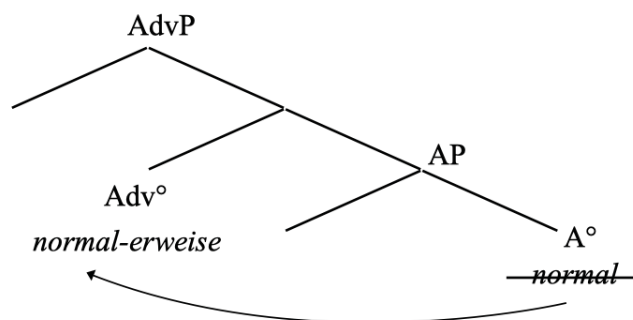


Figure 1. The derivation of the adverbs of the *erweise*-class

What we learn from the case of German adverbs ending in *-erweise* is that (i) the creation of an adverbial expression starting from a nominal phrase headed by a noun meaning 'way, manner' is not only supported by cross-linguistic evidence, but is also attested from the diachronic point of view, and that (ii) this nominal element tends to lose its original independent status, being either silenced – as in German superlative adverbs –, or grammaticalised – as in the *-erweise*-class.

¹ The derivation of adverbs from adjectives is just as self-intuitive as the creation of manner adverbials from a noun meaning 'manner'. Just to provide a few examples, we can mention the regular addition of an adverbial suffix to an adjectival base in different languages: the suffix *-mente* in Romance, e.g. Spanish (adv.) *rápídamente*, Catalan *rápidament*, French *rapidement*, Italian *rapidamente* 'quickly' (Karlsson 1981; Torner 2005; Detges 2015); the suffix *-an* in Hungarian, e.g. (adj.) *gyors* 'quick' > (adv.) *gyorsan* 'quickly'; the suffix *-oren* in Armenian, e.g. (adj.) *agah* 'avaricious, greedy' > (adv.) *agahoren* 'avariciously, greedily', (adj.) *hstak* 'clear; sure' > (adv.) *hstakoren* 'clearly; surely'; the suffix *-(ic)este* in Rumanian, e.g. (adj.) *spiritual* 'spiritual' > (adv.) *spiritualicește* 'spiritually' (v. Protopopescu 2011). As often pointed out (e.g. Fábregas 2007), adverbs modify the verbal phrase just like adjectives modify the nominal phrase, modulo the addition of a functional morpheme in the former case. Given the above mentioned examples, it seems quite convincing (if not necessary) to assume the existence of a head fulfilling the role of adverbialiser somewhere in the structure of the clause. This head turns an adjective into a different category through the addition of a specific marker, allowing it to modify the (presumably structurally lower) verbal complex.

Following Roberts and Roussou (2003), we can treat the creation of the new adverbial suffix *-erweise* in German as a case of grammaticalisation, by which an early lexical item is re-analysed as a functional item. At a certain point in time, the genitivus absolutus construction (e.g. *normaler Weise*) became opaque to native speakers, which chose to reinterpret the suffix *-er* and the noun *Weise* as a single functional morpheme, which was then productively used as an adverbial marker (cf. Lightfoot 1999; Roberts and Roussou 2003: 11-2; Roberts 2007).

This process of reanalysis is in line with a phenomenon attested in the languages of the world, which seem to follow a cyclic path changing analytic expressions into synthetic expressions (cf. Llorente 1997; van Gelderen 2011; Company Company 2014: 470)

In the following chapters, we will see that the overt, or covert, presence of a head meaning ‘way’ or ‘manner’ in manner adverbial constructions finds interesting parallels in the Romance family.

3. The Venetan construction ‘*a la ... (via)*’

Similarly to the case of German superlative adverbs, manner constructions built on an adjectival base and introduced by different prepositions are commonly found in Romance languages (v. Štekauer et al. 2012; Hummel 2014, 2017; Salazar García 2017).

In Venetan, a particular way to form a manner adverbial construction is to use the preposition *a* ‘in, at’ followed by the feminine determiner *la* ‘the’ that agrees in gender and number with a following adjective. Examples of this construction are *a la carlona* ‘coarsely, carelessly’, *a la bona* ‘simply, informally; carelessly’ (lit. ‘at the good’), *a la bruta* ‘at worst’ (lit. ‘at the ugly’), *a la povareta* ‘poorly, lacking means’ (lit. ‘at the poor’), etc. All these examples represent adverbial expressions with a manner function, and they are commonly selected by verbs like *fare* ‘to make, to act’ (v. (6)), *vivere* ‘to live’, but they can also appear in the left periphery of the clause with a scene-setting or presentational function (as in (7)):

- (6) El fa sempre le robe a la carlona.
he make.PRS.3SG always the-PL thing-PL at the carlona
‘He always acts carelessly.’
- (7) A la bruta se vedaremo la prossima volta.
at the worst we.REFL see-FUT-1PL the next time
‘At worst we will meet next time.’

We find several of these constructions in different varieties of Venetan. For instance, in the city of Trieste we have (adv.) *a la maledeta*, *a la più bruta*, *a la più trista* (Kosovitz 1890: 248, 72, 485) ‘at worst, in the worst case’, and *a la papal* (Kosovitz 1890: 303) ‘simply, informally, homely’ (lit. ‘at the papal’). In Venice we find (adv.) *a la più maledeta* (Boerio 1856: 388) ‘at worst, in the worst case’ (lit. ‘at the most cursed’), *a l’impensada* (Boerio 1856: 29) ‘unexpectedly, suddenly’ (lit. ‘at the unthought’), *a la cazzadora* (Boerio 1856: 155) ‘coarsely, simply’ (lit. ‘in the hunter’s way’). On the island of Grado the following manner expressions are attested (v. Corbatta 1995): (adv.) *a la vecia* ‘the old-fashioned way’ (lit. ‘at the old’), *a la povera* ‘poorly’ (‘at the poor’), *a la orba* ‘blindly’ (lit. ‘at the blind’), *a la granda* ‘in style, greatly’ (lit. ‘at the great’).

From the morphological point of view, this Venetan construction and the superlative adverb in German are formed in a similar way: in both cases we find a preposition (*a*, in the former, *an*, in the latter) followed by a determiner and an adjective (in the positive degree, in

the former, in the superlative degree, in the latter). In both cases determiner and adjective agree in gender and number (feminine singular, in Venetan, masculine/neuter singular, in German).

Along with morphology, the analogous manner meaning allows us to apply the analysis of the German superlative degree of the adverb provided in the previous section to these Venetan constructions, and hypothesise that here too a silent noun heads the whole phrase.

This would lead to posit a covert noun like Venetan (f.) *via* ‘way’, which would semantically parallel German *Weg* ‘id.’, so that an expression such as *a la povareta* ‘poorly’ could actually represent *a la povareta* <*via*> (lit.) ‘in the poor way’, always with the figurative meaning that the noun ‘way’ may assume cross-linguistically.²

This hypothesis is borne out, since in the variety spoken in Trieste we find both the form *a la maledeta*, and *a la maledeta via* (Kosovitz 1890: 503) ‘at worst, coarsely, carelessly’. (lit.) ‘in the cursed way’, and in Grado we have *a la mata via* (Corbato 1995) ‘madly, wildly’, (lit.) ‘in the mad way’ (cf. also the examples in Rohlf’s 1969: 245). Further support comes from the fact that analogous constructions are attested in Friulian with *vie* as the exact counterpart of Venetan *via*, e.g. *a stupit vie* ‘foolishly’, *a mat vie* ‘madly’, etc. (cf. Marchetti 1952; Karlsson 1981: 124).

Interestingly, the construction with the overt realisation of the head *via* does not imply any detectable semantic or interpretive difference, but it may be perceived as old-fashioned by a modern – especially young – native speaker. Note that the forms with the overt head are attested in old dictionaries for the areas of Venice and Trieste and mainly as relic constructions, whereas they look still partially productive in the variety of Grado, suggesting that, according to the specific rules of each local variety, the head *via* is either permitted, disfavoured, or in the process of being disallowed.

The situation of Venetan thus strikingly recalls that of German, with *via* or *Weg* that are either realised or silenced according to their role in a particular construction (with *Weg* not tolerated if introduced by *an*, but obligatory when introduced by *auf*), or according to the historical stage of each language, with a difference from the diachronic point of view.

Moreover, a parallel can be drawn between Venetan *via* and German *Weise* in terms of grammaticalisation. We said that, in German, an originally independent noun (f.) *Weise* meaning ‘way, manner’ was reanalysed and used productively in the adverbialising suffix *-erweise*. It is interesting to notice that in Venetan we find examples where the noun *via* has lost its nominal function to be frequently added to adverbs and prepositions. For instance, in the variety of Grado we find (adv., prep.) *orovia* ‘along, at’, where *-via* is attached to the noun *oro* ‘edge, border’, or (adv.) *a popavia* (Corbato 1995) ‘astern, towards the stern, close to the stern’, where *-via* is added to an already adverbial construction, i.e. *a popa* ‘by, close to the stern’.

Following Roberts and Roussou (2003), we can think that in both cases a lexical element has lost its original category status and was reanalysed as a functional element, as commonly assumed in the tradition of generative grammar (Lightfoot 1999; Stathi et al. 2010; Diewald 2010). This process of grammaticalisation involved the recategorisation through time of the noun *Weg* in German, and *via* in Venetan, turning them into functional heads responsible for the marking of adverbs from APs (or PPs).

² The semantic development from ‘road, way’ to ‘way, manner’ is frequently attested in ancient and modern languages. In the Indo-European family we may cite Armenian *čanaparh* ‘road, way; way, manner, method’, Ancient Greek (f.) ὁδός ‘road, path; way, manner’, Irish (f.) *slí* ‘way, road; course; means, manner’, (m.) *bealach* ‘way, road; direction; manner’, Russian (f.) *put’* ‘way, path; means’, Persian *râh* ‘road; way; mind’. In the Afro-Asiatic family we find Arabic (m.) *ṭariq* ‘road, street’ vs. (f.) *ṭariqa* ‘manner, means; path, method; system’, Hebrew *derekh* ‘road, path; custom’. We can also mention Ottoman Turkish *yol* ‘road, street; track; way, manner’ and Swahili *njia* ‘path, road; way’, which display the same metaphorical development from (concrete) ‘way, road’ to (abstract) ‘way, manner’.

Summing up, in this section we saw that the presence of a covert or overt head in adverbial constructions is a phenomenon common to both German and Venetan. We furthermore discussed evidence pointing to a common (though independent) diachronic process affecting this head, which either becomes silent or is turned into an adverbial suffix. In the following section we will see that a covert or overt nominal head in adverbial constructions can be hypothesised also for Italian and French.

4. Parallels in Italian and French

In Italian we find a construction which is very similar to the one just described for Venetan and this is built with the preposition *a* plus the feminine determiner *la* followed by a feminine singular adjective.

Examples of this construction are the following: *alla francese* ‘in the French way’ (lit. ‘at the French’), *alla bolognese* ‘in the Bolognese style’ (lit. ‘at the Bolognese’), *all’antica* ‘in the old-fashioned way’ (lit. ‘at the ancient’), *alla cieca* ‘blindly’ (lit. ‘at the blind’), *alla grande* ‘in style, greatly’ (lit. ‘at the great’), *alla svelta* ‘rapidly, quickly’ (lit. ‘at the rapid’), *alla lunga* ‘in the long run’ (lit. ‘at the long’), *alla buona* ‘simply, informally’ (lit. ‘at the good’), etc.

Due to the similar structure and their common manner function, it might be assumed that the silent head in these constructions is the exact counterpart of German (m.) *Weg* and Venetan (f.) *via*, that is Italian (f.) *via* ‘street; way, manner’, which would also exhibit the same metaphorical development from ‘road’ to ‘manner’. However, this goes against cases like *alla vecchia maniera* ‘the old way’, and *alla mia maniera* ‘my way’, where we have the noun *maniera* ‘way, manner’ overtly realised.

This is by no means against our assumption, for there can be different ways to express the same abstract concept even within the same language, so that in Italian one may use the words *via*, *modo*, *maniera* to translate English *way* in its abstract meaning ‘manner, method’.³ What is relevant for the present proposal is that heads with a similar meaning may be silenced in adverbial constructions introduced by a preposition in different languages.

Moreover, the examples from Italian tell us that the ellipsis of the head occurs independently of its eventual position within the phrase. In fact, if *alla vecchia maniera* is fine from the syntactic point of view with the nominal head appearing in situ to the right of the adjective, if we try to apply the same structure to *alla francese* by overtly spelling the head in **alla francese maniera*, we obtain an ungrammatical construction.

Following Cinque (2010: 41), we assume that in Italian a NP is obligatorily raised from its original position to the specifier of an AP expressing provenance, e.g. *un cantante italiano* ‘an Italian singer’ vs. **un italiano cantante*, unlike English, where this raising is not allowed and the only possible order is AP > NP.

Acceptable from the grammatical point of view is thus *alla maniera francese* which has the same meaning of the more frequent headless construction *alla francese* (but see the next section for a semantic difference).

Since adjectives of provenance always follow the noun they refer to in Italian, the NP *maniera* is likely silenced after its raising to a higher position, that is in the specifier of the AP, as shown in the derivation below:

³ An anonymous reviewer underlines that many Venetan expressions find exact parallels in Italian, but these apparently do not represent instances of linguistic borrowing. To this we add that nearly identical morphological parallels can be found throughout the Romance area, cf. Venetan *a la bona*, Italian *alla buona*, Spanish *a la buena* ‘carelessly, simply’. This phenomenon certainly requires a deeper analysis from the historical point of view, because, on the one hand, we posit that any noun that possesses a deeper analysis from the historical point of view, because, on the one hand, we posit that any noun that possesses an abstract meaning ‘manner’ may serve as the basis for adverbials, but, on the other, we do not exclude the influence of linguistic contact in similar constructions.

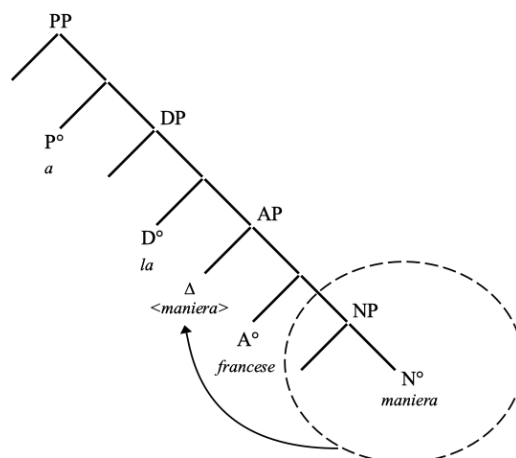


Figure 2. The ellipsis of the nominal head *maniera*

In Figure (2) we show how the whole NP containing *maniera* is moved from its base-generated position up to the left of the adjective *francese* as prescribed by the grammar of Italian. After this movement, the whole phrase may be either fully pronounced, giving *alla maniera francese*, or go through another stage, that is the silencing of the head, yielding *alla francese*.

In the derivation just described, we assume that an optional phonological phenomenon such as the silencing of a nominal head in an adverbial construction occurs after an obligatory syntactic phenomenon such as the movement of the nominal head to the left of an adjective of provenance.

It is true that in modern standard Italian a slight preference for the construction where the head *maniera* is not overtly realised can be found, while the one with the overt head is perceived as somewhat redundant, or heavier from the stylistic point of view. This suggests that, if a common diachronic development can be envisaged, Italian unlike German is in a transitional phase, still allowing for an overt realisation of the head in these constructions, but disfavouring it, being perhaps on its way to forbid it completely in the future.

Another Romance language that behaves like Italian is French. In French we find manner constructions introduced by *à* 'at/to' plus the feminine article *la* 'the' followed by a feminine adjective, such as *à la française* 'in the French way', *à l'ancienne* 'the old way', etc.

In this case too, the head that remains silent is not one meaning 'way' as in German and Venetan, but 'manner', that is a noun like (f.) *façon*, *mode* or *manière* 'id.' as in Italian (cf. Pharies 1997: 403). In fact, we can find the construction *à la française* together with *à la façon/model manière française* with the same meaning.

Since French behaves like Italian in raising a nominal head past an adjective of provenance (Cinque 2010: 41), the derivation of the construction with and without the head is the same as that of the previous examples in Figure (2), so that we will not repeat it here. In both the Italian and French manner constructions described, the nominal head involved means 'manner' and can be either overtly pronounced or silenced.

The possible reason why the nominal head becomes silent – and we saw that this happens in different languages at different stages – may be the fixed nature of manner expressions, so that, at a certain point in time, the overt presence of 'way' or 'manner' is perceived by the speaker as redundant. This semantic redundancy is presumably connected to the fact that the construction is somehow already marked as manner-like by the introducing preposition.

Let us observe some Italian PPs such as *a forza* ‘by force’, *a stento* ‘hardly’ (lit. ‘at difficulty’), *a pelle* ‘at first sight’ (lit. ‘at skin’), *a festa* ‘festively’, *a piedi* ‘on foot’.⁴ All of them convey an undeniable manner-like meaning, which is evident by their paraphrase in English, so that, for instance, *a forza* can be rendered as ‘by way/means of force’, *a festa* ‘in a festive way’. As we see, it is the presence of the preposition *a* that provides the PP with its adverbial meaning. Therefore, we can hypothesise that in the adverbial constructions that we are focused on the preposition and the nominal head ‘manner’ or ‘way’ convey nearly the same manner interpretation. This state of affairs is clearly semantically redundant and would eventually (although, presumably, not necessarily and not immediately) be solved through the ellipsis of either of the two elements.

The ultimate mechanism that leads to the ellipsis of the nominal head is still hard to identify, though, so we will leave this matter for further research. We tentatively suggest that it may be triggered by a principle of phonetic economy, by which an element of the structure that is not essential to the interpretation (as is the nominal head ‘manner’ when introduced by the preposition *a* in its manner function) is omitted at spell-out⁵.

5. Further examples: Italian *in* <modo> *X*

Further support for the presence of a silent head in adverbial expressions comes again from Italian, in particular from the constructions that are built with the preposition *in* ‘in’ plus a masculine singular adjective, e.g. *in chiaro* ‘clearly, plainly’, *in generale* ‘generally’, *in positivo* ‘positively’, etc.

The meaning of these expressions is always manner-like, so that, as in the previous cases, we are allowed to hypothesise the presence of a silent noun meaning something like ‘way’, or

⁴ An anonymous reviewer points out that in Italian we find fixed expressions with a manner interpretation that nevertheless overtly realise the nominal head, e.g. *a capo chino* ‘with bowed head’. This is not at odds with our hypothesis, because cases like this – along with other expressions involving body parts, e.g. *a braccia aperte* ‘with open arms’, *a braccia conserte* ‘with folded arms’, *ad occhi chiusi/aperti* ‘with open/closed eyes’, etc. – express a specific posture or a particular attitude. The presence of the precise body part involved is necessary for the appropriate interpretation as is that of the adjective that modifies it, for more than one body part may be available for interpretation. Otherwise, an expression with a silent head like **ad aperte* could either mean ‘with open arms (i.e. *braccia*)’, legs (i.e. *gambe*), ears (i.e. *orecchie*), nostrils (i.e. *narici*). In the case of manner expressions like *alla tedesca* the manner interpretation is provided by the preposition, and the modification is simply expressed by the adjective, so no ambiguity can arise and the ellipsis takes place.

⁵ An anonymous reviewer asks to clarify why a learner should posit a silent head in these expressions if the preposition already plays a manner role. As discussed by Kayne (2005: 258-260), there is evidence that silent nouns like HOUR, AGE, YEAR are present in expressions of time. Their overt or covert realisation seems to depend on the presence of numerals and determiners. For instance, the expression of the hour in both Italian and French would involve a noun meaning ‘hour(s)’, and this noun is almost always omitted in the former (8a), where a determiner is obligatory, whereas it is always realised in the latter (in 8b), where no determiner is possible.

- (8) a. Sono le (ore) sei.
 b. Il est six heures.
 ‘It is six o’clock.’

We suggest that a nominal head meaning ‘manner’ is omitted from spell-out when preceded by *a* just like a nominal head meaning ‘hour’ can be when preceded by a determiner, as in the case of Italian in (8a). What is crucial for our reasoning is the optionality of the ellipsis which, as we see, is not uniform and varies depending on the local variety of each language as well as on the idiomatic nature of the expression itself. This proves that a nominal head is indeed present in these constructions and, consequently, that a speaker learns when to omit the nominal head according to the context (as in (lit.) *alla (maniera) francese* vs. (idiom.) *alla (*maniera) francese*).

‘manner’, at the base of the whole phrase. A possible candidate is Italian (m.) *modo* ‘way’, which would agree in gender and number with the attested adjectives, and this term is naturally and frequently found in manner expressions, v. *a modo mio* ‘my way’, *in qualche modo* ‘somehow’, etc.

Note, however, that *modo* cannot be freely realised overtly or covertly, since its presence or absence changes the meaning of the expression. Consider for instance the example in (9a), where the expression *in particolare* is presumably in the specifier of Rizzi’s (2004) Mod(ifier) P(hrase), taking scope over the whole clause, and here it has the same meaning of English *in particular*, providing new or deeper information for an already known subject, or, following Chafe (1976: 50), Ernst (2004: 111-2), and Pittner (1999, 2004: 275-6), narrowing the domain in which the sentence that follows plays a role.

The same adjective preceded by the same preposition is not equally acceptable in the same position when the head *modo* is overtly spelled out (as in (9b)). In a lower part of the clause (as shown in (10)) a different and more literal meaning is conveyed, i.e. ‘in a particular way’, when the noun *modo* is realised. Its omission causes ungrammaticality.

- (9) a. In particolare, Gianni suona il pianoforte.
 ‘In particular, Gianni plays the piano.’
 b. *In modo particolare, Gianni suona il pianoforte.
- (10) Gianni suona il pianoforte in *(modo) particolare.
 ‘Gianni plays the piano in a particular way.’

A similar semantic distinction is found when we compare the expressions *in generale* and *in modo generale*. On the one hand, the former and the latter seem to convey the same literal interpretation ‘in a general way, collectively, without exception’ in (11), from which we conclude that the realisation of the noun *modo* is optional. On the other hand, when a less literal interpretation ‘in general, generally speaking’ is intended, as in (12), the realisation of the noun *modo* is ruled out (as in (12b)).

- (11) a. Il progetto va applicato in generale.
 ‘The project is to be applied generally.’
 b. Il progetto va applicato in modo generale.
 ‘The project is to be applied in a general way.’
- (12) a. In generale, Gianni si comporta bene.
 ‘Generally, Gianni behaves well.’
 b. *In modo generale, Gianni si comporta bene.

There thus seems to be a distinction between a strict interpretation of the PP and a more general one, that is one that conveys the literal manner-like meaning, and one that conveys an idiomatic reading. This difference is also clearly connected to the overt presence of the nominal head: when the head can be overtly realised we generally get a literal reading, whereas, when the head is (obligatorily) elided, the reading is idiomatic, with a figurative interpretation of the elements involved in the construction.⁶

⁶ In this case, it is interesting to notice that an adverbial such as Italian *alla francese* – which, as we said, has got the same meaning of *alla maniera francese* – may also acquire a figurative interpretation in an idiomatic expression like *bacio alla francese*, which does not describe a kiss given in the French way, but a kiss given using the tongue. In

This difference has already been noticed by scholars and is commonly explained in terms of a gradual process of grammaticalisation. In Hummel (2017: 28), adverbials introduced by a preposition are grouped into a specific cross-linguistic category (that is referred to as ‘paraphrase’ or ‘type C’ in his study) which is characterised by a high degree of productivity, especially in Romance languages.

Adverbials of the type-C can contain nouns and verbs, but very often adjectives too (Hummel 2017: 32). Interesting for our hypothesis is the fact that adverbials of this kind are frequently the source of lexical adverbs, suggesting a diachronic relationship between analytic constructions involving a preposition plus other lexical items and the creation of (synthetic) adverbs. It might be the case that idiomatic expressions like the ones we examined are gradually shifting to full lexical items.

Again, the derivation of a construction such as *in generale* requires that the nominal phrase be first raised past the adjective, as prescribed by the rules of Italian grammar, with a following ellipsis after its landing to the final position in Spec,AP, as shown in Figure (3).

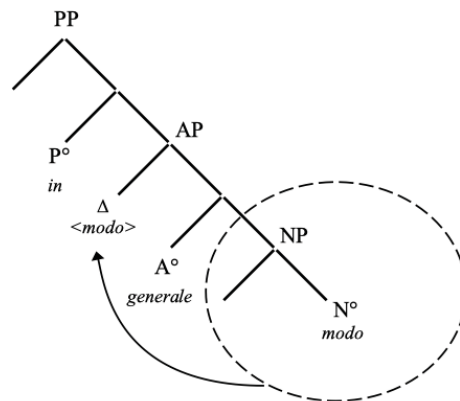


Figure 3. The ellipsis of the nominal head *modo*

Thus, the data from Italian suggest that the silencing of a head in an adverbial expression may also imply a semantic change, from a more concrete and literal interpretation – which is sometimes preserved by a corresponding construction with an overt head – to a more idiomatic one.

We think that the ellipsis of a nominal head is a direct consequence of its use in constructions introduced by a preposition. Since a preposition like *a* seems to play a manner function in a consistent number of cases, it does not seem unreasonable to think that, at a certain point in time and depending on each language’s local variety and specificity, the nominal head which also expresses ‘manner’ may be optionally silenced. In this case the overt realisation of the noun is possible, but redundant, as in the case of Italian and French.

On the other hand, idiomatic expressions that are built on the noun ‘manner’ do not admit its overt realisation because the meaning of the whole expression has gone beyond the literal one.

this case too, the possibility of a metaphorical interpretation is ruled out when the nominal head *maniera* is overtly realised. Something similar occurs in the case of *in (modo) generale* vs. *in generale*, with the former conveying a literal interpretation and the latter a less literal one (in the appropriate context). What is crucial here is not the possible realisation of the noun in the former case, but its impossible realisation in the latter.

At a certain point in time, the concrete meaning of the nominal head has changed towards a different (sometimes figurative) one, and the link to the concrete meaning has become less strict.

This reasoning is fully compatible with standard assumption concerning grammaticalisation. Typologically, words change semantically by developing an abstract meaning alongside the more literal one they inherently possess (v. Traugott 1989; Traugott and König 1989; Willis 2010: 151; Stathi et al. 2010).

We suggest that the nominal ellipsis is allowed by a sort of phonological economy principle, by which an element that does not add relevant information for the interpretation of the clause is omitted from spell-out. Therefore, a given adverbial expression of the kind that we examined in the previous sections becomes perfectly interpretable even when its core part is omitted, the relevant information being provided by the presence of the preposition and the adjective.

We also assume that the cooccurrence in the same language of an adverbial expression with and without the same head (e.g. Italian *in generale* vs. *in modo generale*) is allowed by a semantic split: once a given expression loses its original literal meaning (with the consequent silencing of its head), a new expression is created to re-convey this meaning, and in this case the head can be overtly spelled out.

Finally, we would like to underline that our assumptions do not provide that the presence of the nominal head plays a direct role in the disambiguation of an adverbial expression vs. an idiomatic expression. The optional ellipsis in the former case is due to redundancy, whereas the obligatory ellipsis in the latter is likely due to a semantic change towards an abstract reading, so that two distinct processes (although with a common origin) are at work here.

6. Conclusions

In this study we presented several pieces of evidence suggesting that in different languages an analytic manner construction consisting of a preposition plus an adjective may contain a silent head meaning ‘way’, or ‘manner’, elaborating on Kayne’s theories (2016).

Depending on the language examined, we saw that this head is never realised, or possibly realised, which we take as depending on language-specific rules, diatopic variation and idiomatic use. In German, the head *Weg* is never found overtly in the creation of the superlative degree of adverbs, but it can be realised in analogous manner expressions. In Venetan, the overt head *via* seems to be now obsolete, or restricted to isolated – and thus more conservative – varieties. In Italian and French, the realisation of nominal heads in manner constructions is possible, but somewhat disfavoured, whereas it is prohibited in idioms.

We assume that the overt realisation of the head depends on the stage that each language has reached within a general tendency towards the ellipsis of these elements in idiomatic expressions. However, ellipsis is not the only option, for we also detected an alternative fate for nominal heads in manner expressions, that can be reanalysed as adverbial suffixes, as discussed for German *-erweise* and Venetan *-via*.

We thus hope to have shed some light on a phenomenon that is undoubtedly quite common in Romance but may be also marginally posited for German, sketching the evolution of adverbial PPs from a cross-linguistic and a diachronic point of view.

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